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Message Text

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PAGE 01 LILONG 00501 050855Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------119809 060503Z /21
R 050830Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1765
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 0501

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH, US, UK
SUBJECT: SHOULD WE USE BANDA TO GET TO SITHOLE

REF: LUSAKA 1144

1. LUSAKA'S INFORMATION INCORRECT IN THAT SITHOLE DID
COME TO BLANTYRE AS PLANNED. IN FACT, BANDA TOLD
ME LAST SATURDAY MORNING THAT FOLLOWING OUR CONVERSATION
HE WOULD BE MEETING WITH SITHOLE. ON THAT OCCASION I
ASKED BANDA IF IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO MEET WITH
HIM WHILE HE IS IN LILONGWE THIS WEEK IN ORDER TO REVIEW
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND GET HIS "PRIVATE ESTIMATE"
OF HOW WELL THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT IS ACTUALLY FUNCTIONING.
BANDA, WHO HAD STARTED TO LEAVE THE ROOM, RETURNED
TO HIS SEAT AND SAID TO ME EMPHATICALLY HE IS CERTAIN IN
HIS OWN MIND THAT SMITH HAS EVERY INTENTION OF LEAVING
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THE GOVERNMENT AT THE END OF THIS YEAR AND RETIRING TO
HIS FARM. HE SAID HE IS CONVINCED OF THIS FROM
INFORMATION HE HAS RECEIVED FROM SITHOLE AND FROM HIS OWN
INDIRECT CONTACTS WITH THE INNERMOST CIRCLES OF THE
SMITH REGIME. HE INDICATED HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO TALK
WITH ME AND I EXPECT TO SEE HIM HERE ON SATURDAY MORNING,
APRIL 8.

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2. IN CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT BANDA YESTERDAY MORNING, BANDA MADE SAME POSITIVE ASSERTION TO BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER SCOTT WITH REGARD TO SMITH'S INTENTIONS. HE ALSO INDICATED HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE SOVIET BACKING BEHIND NKOMO BUT GAVE NO FURTHER INFORMATION AS TO THE NATURE OF THE BRIEFING HE WAS PRESUMABLY GIVEN BY SITHOLE.

3. WE THINK THAT BANDA'S DEEPLY FELT SUSPICIONS OF NKOMO, WHOM HE HAS KNOWN FOR MANY YEARS, AND HIS DISLIKE AND CONTEMPT FOR MUGABE AS A MARXIST RADICAL, ARE SUCH THAT IT IS UNLIKELY HE COULD BE PERSUADED TO TRY STRONGLY TO INFLUENCE SITHOLE TO ATTEND ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE. HOWEVER, IF THE BRITISH WERE OF A MIND WITH US TO TRY THIS TACK, A GOOD OPPORTUNITY WILL PRESENT ITSELF WHEN BANDA VISITS LONDON (APRIL 15-25) AND ON OUR PART WHEN HE VISITS WASHINGTON (APRIL 27-29).
STEVENSON

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